

Different Ways to Believe in Jesus

Elements and Examples of Easy Believism

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“Different Ways to Believe in Jesus”

Even though the Bible says “to believe in Jesus” is the way to be saved, it is possible to “believe in Jesus” and still not be a Christian. After all, there are many different ways to “believe in Jesus.” James 2:19, for example, says: “You *believe* there is one God. Good! Even the demons *believe* that - and shudder.” The “belief” which demons have in God is actually better than that of some human beings because demons, at least, “shudder” at the future consequences of what awaits them. Even *they* know that their kind of “belief” is not enough! Some humans don’t. In fact, there is creeping across this country today an epidemic of *easy believism* - a “form of religion” that is characterized more by *mere belief* than by *real conviction and courageous, consistent practice* of Biblical truths & following Jesus in whole-hearted discipleship! This *easy believism* may be the most prevalent form of “insanity” in the world. Many people today, for example, have found it “fashionable, popular, and convenient” to be *religious* - socially acceptable to be a church “member,” and even prestigious to be considered “born again.” Therefore, let us note 3 elements (traits or characteristics) of this insane *easy believism* and 3 examples of it in the Bible.

The **1st trait** of *easy believism* is that it *specializes in entertainment* and the biblical example of it is found in Jn.2:23-25.

These people “believed” in Jesus when they saw the miracles He performed - they “believed” in Him as a Miracle-Worker. They responded to Him with enthusiasm because of the spectacular “signs” He was showing them. But their “belief” was not *commitment* to Him as Lord - and *that* is a necessary component of the “belief” that leads to salvation.

In v. 24, the word translated “commit” (KJV) is the same word in the original language of the NT that is translated “belief” in v. 23. In other words, Jesus did not “believe” their “belief.” He did not “commit” Himself to them because they did not “commit” themselves to Him! They only “believed” in Him for the *entertainment* value of His miracles. Their “belief” rested solely on the wonders He was performing.

The popular assumption today that “any kind of belief” in God is sufficient is simply insufficient! Remember, the demons “believe,” but they certainly are not saved. A Sunday School teacher once asked her pupils, “Why do you believe in God?” The pastor’s son said, “Well, I guess it just runs in our family.” It is popular to be ‘religious’ today. Some *believe* because “it just runs in our family,” or is the “faddish” thing to do among the youth or Senior Citizens. There are many religious cults today with their own brand of *easy believism*. Many people today “believe in God” in some distorted, vague, imperceptible way. But they have not *committed* themselves to the God Who has manifested Himself personally and clearly in Jesus - and they are not saved! *Saving belief* requires *commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ*. Until we do that, He will never ‘commit’ Himself to us either!

This **1st trait** of *easy believism* which *specializes in entertainment*, in fact, *demands* it. Many today want a church where they can be entertained. Many who come to our church buildings do not come as genuine, godly worshipers of Jesus to a holy sanctuary, but as “disinterested spectators” to a refrigerated auditorium. *We pay more attention to the so-called “house of God” than we do the “God of the house.”* If the *singing* is second-class; if the *sermon* is not short &

spiced-up with humor; if there is any hint of “boredom,” then they will criticize - or more often or frequently, complacently stay home.

Many today are caught up in the “entertainment” mentality of our culture, and what should be *worship* services have actually degenerated into “show-biz” performances, built around *superstar personalities*, watched with sharp criticism by “spectators,” and then evaluated with either “applause” or “booing.” The presence of Jesus Christ is neither *sought* nor *expected*! *Easy believism* is “religious,” but “religiously repulsive” to God. Many people today *say* they “believe in Jesus.” But it is possible to “believe in Jesus” in a way that does not lead to salvation. **Jn. 1:12** states that “believing in Jesus” is the same as “receiving Jesus.” It is not enough to simply “believe” He existed historically; or to “believe” other ‘facts’ about Him; or even to be emotionally “attracted” to Him. We must believe in the sense that we ‘commit’ ourselves to Him as Lord.

The **2nd trait** of *easy believism* is that it is *soft* and the biblical example of it is found in Jn. 8:30-37, 59.

The trait of being “soft” is lighthearted, halfhearted, indifferent.” These verses are about people who ‘believe’ and yet do not really ‘believe.’ They refer to people who think what Jesus said is “sort-of-true,” but who are not willing to give Him *continuous yieldedness and allegiance*. Vs. 31 states that ‘saving faith’ is a conditional, continuing faith: “if you *continue* in My Word, then you are My disciples.” It is easy enough to be “attracted” to Jesus in some sort of superficial, emotional way, but the real test comes in being “attached” to Jesus in continuous discipleship. Some people are like the boy who fell out of bed. When asked how it happened, he replied that he “did not know unless he went to sleep too close to where he got in.” Following Jesus is not and cannot be a part-time job; it is a daily assignment. Those who wish to pursue spirituality as a mere ‘hobby’ will not discover what Jesus and Christianity are all about. Nevertheless, we have those sea-gull-type church people who *fly in occasionally, squawk a lot, dump on you, and then fly off!* They may have been “attracted” to Jesus for various reasons, but they are not “attached” to Him in continuous discipleship. The so-called *believers* in v. 31 gave some kind of intellectual ‘belief’ to His reality but did not possess that saving belief/faith that *continued* to follow Him (v.59). Jesus, however, said that only those who “continue in His Word” would truly be His disciples. [According to Jn 6:66, there were many with the name “disciple” who failed to do just that.] Jesus, therefore, clearly recognized the possibility of a halfway house of faith & cherished no illusions regarding its adequacy. Let’s face it: some from among the fickle followers in Jerusalem then fumbled the faith; and if it was true for some then, is it not true for some now? Saving belief or faith requires *staying with* the faith. **I Jn. 2:19**. Some people are initially attracted to the various *messengers* of Christianity but not the very *message and meaning* of Christianity.

This **2nd trait** of being *soft* means it is delicate, mild, light-hearted, not demanding of its practitioners. Whereas biblical Xnty is demanding and serious, American Christianity is *soft* (easy-going, frivolous, and amusing). There are preachers and churches today, for example, for whom the subject of *sin* is either “avoided, ignored, or watered down.” Instead, some preachers tell inspiring stories of “personal” triumph and preach an innocuous/harmless or inoffensive *religion* that is “convenient and comfortable.” We are encouraged today to be fascinated with the

personalities of preachers: in fact, we get to *hear* them on radio, *see* them on TV, and may even *join* them on luxurious cruises to Alaska or the Holy Land - for a “fee”; and for *our* “fee” *they* go “free.” But the more special we make *ourselves*, the less special *God* becomes!

Some of these “peacock preachers” love to *strut* in the limelight. The idea of “sin” has vanished from their vocabularies. Words like “discipline, sacrifice, commitment, & repentance” have all but disappeared or dissipated. However, where there is no repentance, little-to-no emphasis on holiness, and the substitution of the Word of God with the word of man, then and there God and biblical Christianity have been *aborted/obliterated*! The cargo plane has been hijacked and the caged animals have taken over the controls! The warden has been captured and the inmates now run the prison! *Easy believism* reigns instead. It offers nothing but “cheap grace” and no demands for *membership*. It is *soft* and it is sinfully wrong!

The **3rd trait** of *easy believism* is that it is *self-centered* and the biblical example of it is found in Jn. 12:42-43.

Here were a group of religious leaders who “believed,” but were afraid to “confess” their belief, lest they be kicked out of the synagogue. They were seeking to carry out the impossible: being secret disciples or Lady Clairol Christians. However, the idea of “secret discipleship” is a contradiction in terms, for either “the secrecy kills discipleship or discipleship kills the secrecy.” These self-centered *cowards* refused to confess/identify themselves with Jesus “because they loved the praise of men rather than the praise of God” (v.43). They “believed” in some sense that Jesus was right, but they were not prepared to take the risk of openly “confessing” that belief. After all, it would have meant an end to *their place* among the people, an end to *their profit* off the people, and an end to *their prestige* in the eyes of the people! It was too high a price to pay - being ostracized from society and banished from Jewish orthodox religion! *Selfish* concerns dominated their thinking. They, therefore, succumbed to the supreme disaster, and John describes that disaster in one crisp, memorable phrase: “they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.” Has kind of a modern ring to it, doesn’t it?

This **3rd trait** of being *self-centered* is an *I-Me-Mine-focused* attitude where self-denial and self-sacrifice are viewed with “laughter and suspicion.” God has become a “spiritual magic genie” who exists to satisfy our selfish desires and who is expected to “bow” in response to our personal whims. The biblical God of “Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob” has been replaced by the worship of “ourselves.” We are on a quest for “feeling good,” personal happiness/pleasure, individual rights/freedoms, and the accumulation of “material possessions” - at the expense of desperate and dying people! We have created a distorted portrait of Christianity. We have reduced Christianity to nothing more than a *weekend hobby* in which we periodically participate if “the price is right,” if “personal advancement” is probable, and if “intrusion” on *my time* is kept to a sanctified minimum! Thoughts of “ourselves” (our possessions, our feelings, and our personal fulfillment) occupy *center stage*. However, this is not biblical Christianity. It is *not* the teachings of the NT.

Saving belief requires *commitment, confession & continuation* in obedience. **Mt. 10:32-33 - Rom. 10:9-10.** It is crystal clear, therefore, that there are many different ways to believe in Jesus. We have noted three in this article. Only one, however, is accurate and sufficient for salvation!